

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for cleaning tray columns which have been used for rectificatively treating liquids comprising (meth)acrylic acid and/or esters thereof:
the process comprising thereof by

conveying a basic liquid downward through the tray column, and ~~which comprises~~
passing a gas through the tray column in countercurrent to the basic liquid ~~in such a~~
~~manner that,~~

wherein during the cleaning, the difference between the pressure in the gas phase immediately below the lowermost tray of the tray column and the pressure in the gas phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the tray column divided by the number of trays in the column is at least 0.5 mbar per tray.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein, during the cleaning, the difference between the pressure in the gas phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the tray column and the pressure in the gas phase immediately below the lowermost tray of the tray column divided by the number of trays in the column is from 1 to 5 mbar per tray.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein, during the cleaning, the difference between the pressure in the gas phase immediately above the uppermost tray of the tray column and the pressure in the gas phase immediately below the lowermost tray of the tray column divided by the number of trays in the column is from 2 to 4 mbar per tray.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the basic liquid ~~used~~ is an aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein the gas passed through the tray column in countercurrent to the basic liquid is air.